

Message Text

SECRET POSS DUPE

PAGE 01 SANA 00293 310758Z

14/20

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

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O R 301059Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7222

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

S E C R E T SANA 0293

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CORRECT MRN TO READ 0293 VICE 0000
ALSO CORRECT GARBLED TEXT)

.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PIN, YE

SUBJECT: SOVIET ARMS FOR YAR

SUMMARY: LONG ANTICIPATED SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENT HAS ARRIVED, APPAR-
ENTLY WITH MIG-21'S ON DECK. IT IS LIKELY THEREFORE THAT SOME OF
THE MODERN WEAPONS WHICH EARLIER REPORTED AS COMING ON EXPEDITED
BASIS FROM SOVIETS ARE IN THE HOLDS OF SHIP NOW DOCKED IN HODEIDAH.
SAUDIS , MEANTIME, HAVE FINALLY ENTERED THE LISTS WITH WELL
CONCEIVED AND DETAILED PLAN TO COUNTER SOVIET OFFERS.

1. IT IS AN IRONY THAT IN THE SAME WEEK THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE HANDED
USG REPS IN RIYADH A DETAILED, LENGTHY AND WELL-CONCEIVED PLAN FOR
MILITARY MODERNIZATION IN YEMEN, THE SOVIETS HAVE BEGUN DELIVERIES
OF MIG-21'S AND PROBABLY THE T-54/55 TANKS AND OTHER MODERN WEAPONS
WHICH, ACCORDING TO YEMENI AND OTHER SOURCES, HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED

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BY THE YARG. THE SAUDI LIST IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO PRICE IN SANA,
BUT WE ARE GUESSING THAT, WITH SPARES, TRAINING, SHIPMET AND AMMO,

WE ARE LOOKING AT A PACKAGE THAT COULD AMMOUNT TO AS MUCH AS \$150 MILLION OVER A FIVE YEAR PROGRAM. ACCORDING TO OUR DATT, WHO ATTENDED RIYADH MEETING, THERE IS A SECOND HALF OF SAUDI PLAN, NOMINALLY FOR SECOND FIVE YEARS, WHICH WORKED OUT BUT NOT YET APPROVED BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. THE USG IS, IN ADDITION, ONLY PART OF SAUDI PLAN. THE PURCHASES OF ARMOR , RADIOS AND SOME HELICOPTERS FROM THE FRENCH SHOULD SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE VALUE OF PROGRAM IN FIRST FIVE YEARS.

2. SAUDI REACTION TO SOVIET DELIVERIES, AS SO FAR REPORTED, IS IN SOME RESPECTS HARD TO UNDERSTAND. CLEARLY, THE KIND OF EQUIPMENT BEING DELIVERED NOW POSES A THREAT TO THEM, EVEN THOUGH FIRST GROUP OF YARG PILOTS TO BE TRAINED IN MIG-21'S DID NOT RPT NOT LEAVE FOR TRAINING UNTIL LAST WEEK, ACCORDING TO FRIENDLY YARG AIR FORCE OFFICER. OPERATIONALLY, THEREFORE, THE MIG'S (LIKE THE OTHER MODERN EQUIPMENT) WON'T BECOME A REAL THREAT FOR A YEAR. CLEARLY, ALSO, THE SAUDIS HAVE REASON TO BE DISAPPOINTED THAT THE YARG HAVE TURNED TO THE SOVIETS, EVEN THOUGH THE YEMENIS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR TWO YEARS TO SEE SOMETHING COME OF FIRM AND REPEATED SAUDI PROMISES TO ACT IN THAE MILITARY FIELD AND , APPARENTLY, STILL HAVEN'T BEEN TOLD IN ANY DETAL WHAT SAUDIS INTEND. US REPS GAINED IMPRESSION FROM DHAHIRI THAT SAG IDD NOT WANT US TO DISCUSS DETAILED CONTENTS IWITH YEMENIS AT THIS TIME.

3. WHATIS HARD TO UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, IS CONFIDENCE OF DEP PRIMIN JAGHMAN IN TALK WITH CHARGE LAST NIGHT THAT SAUDI REACTION WILL BE MUTED. JOGHMAN SAID SOVIET EQUIPMENT DELIVERIES HAVE BEEN REVIEWED BY HAMDI WITH KING KHALID, WHO SAID THAT AS LONG AS SAUDIS HAD NOT RPT NOT ACTED MORE QUICKLY, YEMENI RECOURSE TO ONLY OTHER AVAILABLE SOURCE WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. IF THIS REPORT IS TRUE, AND IT HAS BEEN ECHOED HERE BY SAUDI DIPLOMATS, THEN PERHAPS VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT ARE SPLIT IN KINGDOM, AND REACTION WILL NOT BE COMPLETELY HOSTILE.

4. I BELIEVE THAT WOULD BE THE WISE COURSE, AND ONE WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE. SAUDIS CAN HOPE TO TAKE GAME AWAY FROM SOVIETS NOW THAT THEY ARE FINALLY MOVING IN ARMS FIELD. ARMS HAVE ALWAYS MATTERED TO ARMY OFFICER HAMDI EVEN MORE THAN HEAVY SAUDI ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. WE THINK NOW THAT COMMON INTERESTS BETWEE
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YEMEN AND SAUDIS DWARF ANYTHING SOVIETS COULD CRANK UP. SOVIET DELIVERIES ARE A SET-BACK, OF COURSE. IT WILL NOW TAKE SAUDIS MUCH LONGER TO REDUCE SOVIET ROLE AND INFLUENCE HERE, WHICH HAS NEW LEASE ON LIFE. BUT IN THE LONG TERM, SAUDIS HAVE THE WINNING CARDS IF THEY CARE TO PLAY THEM.

5. WE KNOW THAT HAMDI WILL NOT COME OUT OF THIS PERSONALLY WITH HIGH MARKS OR CREDIBILITY. HE MOVED TO SOVIETS, HOWEVER, AFTER SAUDIS WERE APPARENTLY MOVING TOWARD HIS CHIEF RIVAL, ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAID, IN ANACHRONISTIC PREFERENCE

FOR TRIBAL GROUPS OVER CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. BY TIME TURKI MISSION,
DELAY OF SUBSIDIES, OTHER AFFRONTS TO
YAR HAD BEEN WORKED OUT IN YARG - SAG SUMMIT MEETING
DURING TIME OF HAJJ,
FEARFUL HAMDI HAD ALREADY CLOSED DEAL WITH SOVIETS, WHO WERE
DESPERATELY PRESSING HIM TO ACCEPT. SOVIETS, OBVIOUSLY,
HAVE EVEN GIVEN UP ON THEIR CARDINAL DEMAND: NO DELIVERIES
BEFORE HAMDI VISITS MOSCOW.

6. HAMDI HAS MISLED US AS WELL AS SAUDIS, BUT AS MAN THREATENED
BY SAUDIS, AFTER MOVING YEMEN CLOSER THAN ANY PREVIOUS
SANAA REGIME TO THE KINGDOM, HE MAY HAVE SEEN US AS HAND
IN GLOVE WITH SAUDIS. AFTER USG WAS UNABLE OR UNWILLING,
IN HIS EYES, TO MOVE
THE SAUDIS TO CONCLUDE A WESTERN ARMS PACKAGE, THE NAIVE
AND INEXPERIENCED STREAK IN HAMDI MUST HAVE LED HIM TO TRY TO BUY
TIME

WITH HALF TRUTHS ABOUT WHAT SOVIETS WERE DOING.

7. WITH SAUDI ARMS PROGRAM GEARING UP, WE ARE FORTUNATELY
IN GOOD POSITION TO ESTABLISH IN REAL SENSE OUR
OWN CREDIBILITY AND DEPENDABILITY AS WELL AS TEST HAMDI'S. WE
CAN NOW GO TO HIM NOT ONLY WITH
STERN WARNINGS ABOUT DANGERS OF SOVIET CONNECTION, BUT INDUCEMENTS TO
TAKE ALTERNATIVE COURSE.
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